

Kyle Maggy  
The Forest for the Trees  
Annotation #6  
11/13/12  
WC: 937

1. Title, director and release year?

This film annotation analyses *The Forest for the Trees*. The director was Bernadine Mellis. The release year was 2006.

2. What is the central argument or narrative of the film?

The central narrative of the film follows the civil suit Judi Bari and Earth First vs. the FBI and Oakland Police. Judi Bari, an environmental and social activist, and Darryl Cherney were injured after a pipe bomb exploded in the car they were riding in. Judi and Darryl were accused of being terrorists transporting a bomb. Initial charges were dropped due to a lack of evidence. However, the FBI and Oakland Police did not attempt to look for the real suspects behind the attack, despite obvious physical evidence that the bomb was hidden in the car, and was not being transported in plain sight. The movie is just one example of how law enforcement agencies infringe upon activists civil rights, prolonging trials, conducting unjust investigations, and making false court statements.

3. How is the argument or narrative made and sustained? How much scientific information is provided, for example? Does the film have emotional appeal?

Filmmaker Bernadine Mellis follows the trial in a documentary format, the main subject being her father the lead attorney for the plaintiffs. The film covers the historical events of the attack using interviews, photos, and found footage. During the trial, cameras were not allowed in the courtroom; instead, interviews were conducted after every day of arbitration. The interviews, pictures, and footage presented the evidence supporting Judi Bari. The lack of hard scientific information such as fingerprints or DNA further supported Judi Bari. The use of Judi Bari's deposition, the final interview before her passing, had a very strong emotional appeal. Although her side won the civil suit, she did not make it to see the case make it to trial.

4. What sustainability problems does the film draw out?

Political? Legal? Economic? Technological? Media and Informational?  
Organizational? Educational? Behavioral? Cultural? Ecological?

This film addresses several sustainability problems. Most directly, the film addresses the legal/political issues surrounding civil rights. Bari and Cherney were wrongfully accused of being terrorists. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies neglected to pursue the real attackers following the bombing. The film highlighted how peaceful protesters are profiled and harassed by various government agencies, most commonly the FBI. Due to the nature of Bari's activism and being a leader of Earth First, the film addressed several environmental problems, most prominently the clear-cutting of forests. Additionally, the film addressed problems with the media.

From the time of the bombing to the time of the trial traditional media outlets chose to not cover the story. Only when the verdict was made did the media give any significant coverage.

5. What parts of the film did you find most persuasive and compelling? Why?

I found the interviews with loggers and truckers to be the most compelling. The interviews show that activists were truly trying to make peaceful and humane negotiations. Despite this fact, law enforcement agencies still accused Bari of being a terrorist. I was unaware that FBI kept profiles on nearly all existing activist groups. I was also compelled by the images that captured after the bombing. The evidence clearly shows that the bomb was hidden underneath the front of the car. The FBI and Oakland Police Department clearly had their conclusions made before doing what little investigation they did.

6. What parts of the film were you not compelled or convinced by? Why?

For the most part, I was compelled by the entirety of the film. The film was clear, concise, and easy to follow along. The film did not have any interviews of the defendants of the trial, but this is most likely due to stipulations attached to the verdict. Due to the verdict being in favor of Judi Bari, it makes accepting the provided evidence a no brainer.

7. What audiences does the film best address? Why?

The film best addresses civil rights/liberties activists. The film is an historical example of why citizens should continue to fight to reform our faulty representative democracy. The film also speaks to any general activist, showing them that there is an inherent risk in fighting the status quo, and to be careful when protesting, monkeywrenching, etc. The film seems to address a more radical, or old school, type of activist.

8. What could have been added to this film to enhance its environmental educational value?

The film could have gone more into detail on how citizens' rights are being infringed upon. Today, not many people understand the rights they are entitled to. The film was more of a recap rather than an educational documentary.

9. What kinds of action and points of intervention are suggested by the film? If the film itself does not suggest corrective action, describe actions that you can imagine being effective.

The film did not directly address any action or intervention points. One could imagine that the intent of the film is to encourage individuals to defend civil rights and liberties. The film really did not really explain how citizens could go about getting involved in activism or how to educate themselves on issues.

10. What additional information has this film compelled you to seek out? (Provide at least two supporting references.)

The film prompted me to look into other more recent instances when the FBI has harassed and attempted to intimidate activists.

<http://www.salem-news.com/articles/august132012/occupy-raids.php>

<http://www.activistpost.com/2011/09/american-peace-activist-speaks-about.html>

Kyle Maggy  
Erin Brockovich  
Annotation #7  
11/13/12  
WC: 832

1. Title, director and release year?

This film annotation analyses *The Erin Brockovich*. The director was Steven Soderbergh. The release year was 2000.

2. What is the central argument or narrative of the film?

Based on a true story, the film follows Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts) throughout her investigation of Pacific Gas and Electric back in the early 1990's. Pacific Gas and Electric had knowingly contaminated the groundwater that served hundreds of families in Hinkley, CA. Instead of trying to clean up the contamination, PGE tried to buy out the homes of affected victims in hopes of keeping them quiet and getting them to move. PGE paid doctors and other record keepers to falsify or hide documents. Hexavalent chromium was the toxic chemical causing adverse effects on families, including various cancers, miscarriages, etc. The film shows how some corporations yield negative externalities and cover them up instead of using proper corrective action.

3. How is the argument or narrative made and sustained? How much scientific information is provided, for example? Does the film have emotional appeal?

The narrative is more like that of a drama film rather than a documentary. The film is based on a true story, following the life of Erin Brockovich during her investigation of PGE. While the scientific information provided in the film is based off of the real events, there is no way to tell if it is real. However, the film does have very strong emotional appeal. Erin Brockovich pours everything into getting the case to trial. Her interviews with plaintiffs are very emotional. The film was very well done, and the director did an excellent job of capturing the actors and actresses' emotion.

4. What sustainability problems does the film draw out?

Political? Legal? Economic? Technological? Media and Informational?  
Organizational? Educational? Behavioral? Cultural? Ecological?

The film addresses environmental, legal, corporate problems, and economic problems. Environmentally, the water table was contaminated with a toxic chemical, a chemical that is commonly used as an anti-corrosive. Hazardous chemical had continued to be allowed with little government regulation and enforcement. Legally, the film shows how cases regarding the environment are often overwhelmed by paperwork and powerful corporate bankrolls. Both previously mentioned problems tie in with corporations. The highlight of the film is how PGE knowingly contaminated water tables with toxic chemicals. Instead of coming clean, PGE used their fiscal power to harass homeowners, "purchase" doctors and record keepers, and make

taking the case to trial very difficult. The film also shows how sustainability problems tend to have the most serious effects on poorer communities.

5. What parts of the film did you find most persuasive and compelling? Why?

I was compelled by the entire film. In my opinion it was very well done, although I do not know if it differed significantly from the actual events. I attribute much of the success to the talent of Julia Roberts. However, the story itself is very moving. Although the contaminated water seriously affected many families, eventually they did receive punitive rewards. It is an inspiring case in which the "right" side came off on top.

6. What parts of the film were you not compelled or convinced by? Why?

The film was very one-sided. The director could have attempted to illustrate what went on behind the walls of PGE. With the exception of PGE's lawyers, there was no other attempt to cover PGE's side of the story. It is possible that this is due to the fact that not much was known about PGE's knowledge of the events.

7. What audiences does the film best address? Why?

Because the film was a "Blockbuster", it addresses many different audiences. Fundamentally though, it seemed to address women and lower income families. I believe this was in attempt to inspire these parties to reclaim the power they deserve, and show how any person can make a difference.

8. What could have been added to this film to enhance its environmental educational value?

Directly, very little could have been done. For non-documentaries it is very difficult to be educational. In theory, the director could have made the film more scientific and had more legal jargon, but this most likely would have made the film less attractive to audiences.

9. What kinds of action and points of intervention are suggested by the film? If the film itself does not suggest corrective action, describe actions that you can imagine being effective.

The film does not suggest any action points. The only real action that could be taken is the government banning the use of certain toxic substances and having the man/women power to enforce regulation and laws.

10. What additional information has this film compelled you to seek out? (Provide at least two supporting references.)

The film prompted me to find a comparison of the film to the real story, and unfortunately the results of this search did not have the happy outcome like the movie. This link contains the sub-links to the other articles I found.

Kyle Maggy  
If a Tree Falls  
Annotation #8  
11/13/12  
WC: 1051

1. Title, director and release year?

This film annotation analyses *If A Tree Falls*. The directors are Marshall Curry and Sam Cullman. The release year was 2011.

2. What is the central argument or narrative of the film?

The central argument of the film is that environmental activists who monkeywrench, sabotage, and partake in civil disobedience should not be charged as eco-terrorists. The narrative follows the actions and trial of ELF member Daniel McGowan. Daniel has arrested with several other ELF members for multiple cases of arson. In no instance was a bystander injured, killed, or present at any of the fires. Under the pressure of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, the Judge applied the terrorism enhancement to McGowan's case. However, some of the masterminds of the attacks, McGowan's previous friends, accepted plea deals in return for ratting out McGowan and several others. McGowan originally was looking at life in prison, later appeals brought it down to a more reasonable sentence of 8 years in a special prison unit. This movie raises a huge red flag on how environmentalists are treated by the United States legal system.

3. How is the argument or narrative made and sustained? How much scientific information is provided, for example? Does the film have emotional appeal?

The narrative is made with current interviews of McGowan and his friends and families, mixed with flashbacks of the associated events. The movie uses a significant amount of found footage and pictures. The film captures both the perspectives of the ELF and several of the "attacked" parties. Not much scientific information is conveyed, but there is a lot of legal talk and jargon. The movie gets very emotional when McGowan is sentenced. After months of being under house arrest McGowan awaited the day of his sentencing, trying to mentally prepare himself.

4. What sustainability problems does the film draw out?  
Political? Legal? Economic? Technological? Media and Informational?  
Organizational? Educational? Behavioral? Cultural? Ecological?

The movie touched on several sustainability problems including logging and deforestation, gmo's, SUV's, police brutality, unsustainable development, and legal. More important than any single problem is how the events of this movie had an adverse effect on the environmentalists as a whole. Many peaceful protesters who had dedicated their lives to protecting the environment saw these acts as atrocities. Many believe that these acts reset any peaceful progress that was made. However, at the same time many felt the attacks were necessary. Peaceful protests and civil

disobedience were not yielding significant results. Monkeywrenching, sabotage, and arson provided instant results. One day there was a problem, and the next there was not. The actions of the ELF immediately halted developments and shut down logging operations over night. Another serious problem represented in this movie are the problems with the legal system. McGowan faced life in prison and being branded as a terrorist because he would not testify against his acquaintances. However, those who chose to testify got off with extremely short sentences if any at all. The scariest of events was the judges' application of a terrorism enhancement. People, who had never harmed a fellow human or intended to do so, were branded as terrorists. This threat may be detrimental at intimidating activists in the future.

5. What parts of the film did you find most persuasive and compelling? Why?

I found the interviews with McGowan to be the most compelling and persuasive. McGowan is polite, intelligent, well-spoken, down to earth, and very kind, yet he is a terrorist? His interviews show how individuals like him feel like they are in such a deep hole that they must take radical action. Why is progress not being made if so many people want to see the change? The film shows that with government and corporations ignoring citizens' requests, protests are bound to get more frequent, violent, and destructive.

6. What parts of the film were you not compelled or convinced by? Why?

For the most part, the film neglected to interview any of McGowan's ELF associates. Several of his acquaintances also chose not to testify, I am not sure why they were not interviewed. Although loggers and law enforcement officials were interviewed, the film never shared the opinion of the general public on the matter. I thought this was strange.

7. What audiences does the film best address? Why?

The film best addresses active environmentalists. It makes you seriously reconsider what actions are worth it or not. The film illustrates how there are severe consequences associated with radical activism. The film can be used as an enlightening experience for current activists.

8. What could have been added to this film to enhance its environmental educational value?

Several of the interviewed subjects in the film mentioned how they thought the radical actions taken by the ELF were a disgrace to all environmentalists. However, no one provided a model or guidelines for how to be an activist and how to make a difference. It is clear that in the film civil disobedience and peaceful protests were not making any ground, so how can activists get results? What are the best methods? And when have you taken things to far?

9. What kinds of action and points of intervention are suggested by the film? If the film itself does not suggest corrective action, describe actions that you can imagine being effective.

The film does not directly suggest any action or intervention points. However the tone and sincerity of McGowan's interviews inspire people to stick to their values and never compromise your friends or beliefs. McGowan fully accepted the consequences for his actions, not once did he show any sign of regret. Although he may have not made the best decisions, his integrity and trustworthiness are traits that other environmentalists can learn from and use.

10. What additional information has this film compelled you to seek out? (Provide at least two supporting references.)

This film prompted me to look more into the United State definition of terrorism. To my understanding there is not a universal definition, and definitions range across different departments and agencies. Ultimately it is up to a single judge to decide whether to impose a terrorism enhancement on a case-by-case basis. Definitions are very ambiguous and open to strong interpretation bias.

<http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/terrorism-2002-2005>

<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/terrorism-faqs.html>

<http://publicintelligence.net/the-continually-expanding-definition-of-terrorism/>



Kyle Maggy  
Fresh  
Annotation #9  
11/13/12  
WC: 1114

1. Title, director and release year?

This film annotation analyses *Fresh*. The director was Ana Sofia Joanes. The release year was 2009.

2. What is the central argument or narrative of the film?

Americans have become obsessed and concerned with the convenience of their food. The food industry has been trying to keep up with this demand by making production-enhancing shortcuts. Industrialized and conventional farming practices have destroyed the fundamental genetics of the animals and the staple foods that we are eating. Farmers use steroids, GMO's, and toxic pesticides to grow and feed as much as they can at unsustainable rates. In addition, farmers are forcing their animals to eat their own kind. The industry is disrupting and going against nature, and as a result, we are harming our food production. We know that foods are most nutritious in their whole and raw forms, but somehow corporations continue to fill grocery store shelves with highly processed food. Currently, most people cannot afford to pay for organic and all natural foods, and most people do not think about the processed foods that we eat.

3. How is the argument or narrative made and sustained? How much scientific information is provided, for example? Does the film have emotional appeal?

The argument is made through interviews of both sustainable and unsustainable farmers, grocery store owners, consumers, and other agricultural professionals. While not much data is provided, there is significant technical terminology, educational points, and best practices. Certain aspects of the film do have emotional appeal, such as story of the pig farmer who got stabbed by a tusk.

4. What sustainability problems does the film draw out?  
Political? Legal? Economic? Technological? Media and Informational?  
Organizational? Educational? Behavioral? Cultural? Ecological?

The film addresses various problems including ecological, environmental, corporate, technological, and cultural. They express the damage of monocultures, which create resistances year after year, to the point where the pesticides don't even work anymore. From these monoculture farms, the land begins to lack biodiversity and ruins the land, making it unable to even grow crops anymore. The animals follow the same pattern; if animals are left to graze on the same land over and over again, the land is going to become unusable and the animals are going to have less and less to eat. The idea that our food needs to grow and be raised, "faster, bigger, and cheaper," is what is making the industry so extremely corrupt. The industrialized food industry is transforming animals into something that they are not biologically meant

to be. They are feeding chickens dead chickens, feeding cows dead cows, pumping steroids into their feed, and they are modifying the genetic makeup of the animals and crops in order to be what they want them to be. This is not only an unethical way to treat animals, but it is why food-borne illnesses are becoming more and more common in the world. Mad cow disease, swine flu, and others are perfect examples of warning signs of why these processes need to be modified.

Access to healthy and raw foods is not always possible. A lot of people cannot afford to pay for USDA organic or natural foods, so they resort to buying the cheaper foods that are processed to the point where they have little to no nutritional value at all. This inequality of distribution is due to economic inequality. You would think that everyone should have access to the same nutritious food; but it has become a “rich people” product, allowing only the better-off population to afford to be healthy. If people only knew how to grow their own food, then everyone could have access to this sort of food and nutrition and the distribution of health could be widespread.

5. What parts of the film did you find most persuasive and compelling? Why?

The sustainable farmer, Joel, spoke of how we need to respect the design of nature; he said that if we watch how animals behave in nature, they are always moving and they are never eating other animals. I feel as if not enough farmers are thinking in this direction anymore and that most farmers right now in conventional farming are too focused on making enough crops or food in order to create a higher profit from the corporations that are paying them to provide these resources. Joel was able to stop and look at the things that he was growing and raising as animals and parts of nature, rather than something that needs to grow quickly and be killed in order to be processed and put on someone's plate. His ideology of treating animals as what they were designed to be (herbivores) was very compelling to me. The man who spoke of his personal incident of getting stabbed in the knee by a pig truly scared me. Although mad cow disease and other food-borne illnesses caused large public scares, you never really heard much of anyone actually being affected by them. This man, who worked with pigs just about every single day, received the disease. He further explained the biology of the illness and explained how they can actually mutate within your body and fight against your body to cause a more harmful outcome. By hearing this from someone who has experienced it first-hand, it makes a larger impact on me, as a viewer and makes me want to do something about it and work towards some sort of change in which these illnesses are not probable or possible.

6. What parts of the film were you not compelled or convinced by? Why?

While overall I found the film very interesting, there were a few things that annoyed me. The film covered a wide variety of issues but seemed to jump back and forth through them freely, sometimes the cuts did not make sense. Although great depth in each problem cannot be expected, slightly more depth would have been nice.

7. What audiences does the film best address? Why?

The film does great job at addressing both consumers and farmers. It advocates that consumers need to be conscious of their food choices and demand diversity. The film provides farmers with enough information to get them interested in adapting some of the more sustainable farming principles. The film does a good job at staying

positive and not pointing any fingers. Instead, the film is inspiring and empowering towards viewers.

8. What could have been added to this film to enhance its environmental educational value?

I found that the film had more educational value than a lot of other environmental documentaries I have seen. It was comprehensive in the fact that it covered from farmers, to grocery stores, to consumers. It introduced several solutions to each of these problems. To enhance the educational value the film could have went more into depth into each problem as well as solution. It was clear though that the film wanted to cover a wide array of issues associated with agriculture and consumer choice.

9. What kinds of action and points of intervention are suggested by the film? If the film itself does not suggest corrective action, describe actions that you can imagine being effective.

The film suggests that people should move away from eating the processed foods that we find in our grocery stores and move toward purchasing natural, organic, and raw foods from independent markets or stores. People need to find a taste for healthy foods so that they can turn away from the unhealthy habits that they have. The film also urges people to support local and sustainable farming. They are not saying that everyone needs to throw away their lives and move into a rural area and become a farmer. They are saying that people need to practice ecologically conscious consumerism and work towards sustainable lifestyles. All of these suggestions could lead to a healthier population and less risks of disease and land depletion

10. What additional information has this film compelled you to seek out? (Provide at least two supporting references.)

After seeing all of the people in the film that are teaching people how to grow their own food, I have become compelled to learn more about how I could grow my own food in a sustainable manner.

<http://tipnut.com/nifty-food-plants/>

[http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_10529.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10529.cfm)

Kyle Maggy  
At the Edge of the World  
Annotation #10  
10/12/12  
WC: 972

1. Title, director and release year?

This film annotation analyses *At the Edge of the World*. The director was Dan Stone. The release year was 2008.

2. What is the central argument or narrative of the film?

The central narrative of the film is how Japanese whaling vessels continue to defy international bans on the killing of whales. The Japanese justify their killings by saying they are in the name of research. Thousands of whales are killed each year by these Japanese vessels, often at the rate of 15 a day. International governments and agencies are reluctant to enforce the international ban on killing whales. Since the year of the initial ban, 1986, over 19,000 whales alone have been poached and killed in the Antarctica whale sanctuary. Canadian activist Paul Watson and his team from the Sea Shepherd conservation Society track down and disable illegal Japanese vessels. The Japanese refers to them as pirates and eco-terrorists; but by international law standards they are allowed to make "citizens arrests." The film follows the anti-whaling action for one season.

3. How is the argument or narrative made and sustained? How much scientific information is provided, for example? Does the film have emotional appeal?

The argument is made through following the whale activists attempt to disable as many Japanese whaling vessels as possible. Footage from newsrooms and interviews is frequently used. The majority of the film is action packed footage shot while battling Japanese whaling vessels. As mentioned in the previous question, significant scientific information is provided, regarding the population of whales, rate of extermination, etc. In addition, the film provides information on what the international law is supposed to be. Because the film is so intense and action-packed I would say it is very emotionally appealing.

4. What sustainability problems does the film draw out?  
Political? Legal? Economic? Technological? Media and Informational?  
Organizational? Educational? Behavioral? Cultural? Ecological?

The film addresses three main issues, the killing of whales, melting of ice, and loopholes in international law. Whales are nearing extinction because of poachers, most frequently the Japanese who claim they are killing the whales for research. The reality is that they are killing the whales for food, a highly unsustainable food. Their cruel methods of killing the whales with giant harpoons raise questions of global animal ethics. The second largest problem in the film is the flaws in international laws and bans. Whales were banned from being hunted in 1986; however, whaling vessels continue to kill whales. Individual governments are hesitant to enforce

regulations because most of the slaughtering occurs in international waters. Thus, the battle is left in the hands of activists who in these cases are technically classified as pirates. Towards the beginning of the film there is a segment that discusses the issue of melting ice caps.

5. What parts of the film did you find most persuasive and compelling? Why?

The most compelling part of the film for me is when the pirate activists would call in the coordinates of the illegal Japanese vessels to international enforcement agencies, and the agencies/navies would not respond to the incident. Because of this, activists are forced to take action themselves using stink bombs, propeller jamming techniques, and even ramming Japanese ships! There is clear video evidence surfacing every day that shows that the Japanese are clearly breaking international law, but nothing is being done!

6. What parts of the film were you not compelled or convinced by? Why?

Even if it was just thrown in at the end of the movie, I would have liked see interviews with international governments, agencies, and the United Nations asking why they are not doing anything to enforce the laws they have protecting whales. The film as it is very engaging and action packed, but it would have been nice to include perspectives of third parties.

7. What audiences does the film best address? Why?

Due to the somewhat more radical nature of the events in the film it is definitely geared more towards activists. However, judging by the number of awards it has won, it clearly is engaging to many. Personally, for me the movie was a giant wake up call. I sit in my apartment writing reviews on environmental documentaries while there are hundreds of people risking their lives every day trying to protect the earth and its plants and animals. While the film does not tell viewers that they must become more active, it has a subtle effect in doing so.

8. What could have been added to this film to enhance its environmental educational value?

The film was heavily action balanced and could have been extended to include more educational aspects, such as the implications of the decreasing whale population on the oceans ecosystem, the effects of whaling on Japan economy, and what can be done to get governments and agencies to start enforcing conservation laws.

9. What kinds of action and points of intervention are suggested by the film? If the film itself does not suggest corrective action, describe actions that you can imagine being effective.

The film itself did not suggest any action or intervention points to the viewer. However, after watching the film I want to get more involved in my environmental/sustainability efforts. Similar to my response towards other films, it would be nice if the filmmakers could guide viewers in the right direction in how to get more involved in the issue at hand.

10. What additional information has this film compelled you to seek out? (Provide at least two supporting references.)

The film encouraged me to seek out information regarding the laws that are supposed to be protecting whales and other species internationally, and what organizations are supposed to be enforcing these laws.

<http://www.seashepherd.org/who-we-are/laws-and-charters.html>

<http://eelink.net/~asilwildlife/wcn.html>

[http://www.seashepherd.org/images/stories/who-we-are/laws-and-charters-1-30-09 -JER- Sea Shepherd Whaling Paper.pdf](http://www.seashepherd.org/images/stories/who-we-are/laws-and-charters-1-30-09-JER-Sea%20Shepherd%20Whaling%20Paper.pdf)